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Topic 1. Sustainability of current and future forestry operations in NSW

I agree with the statement by Bob Debus the architect of the regional forest agreements who said that sustainable forest management has failed. Logging is now what whaling once was. The timber supply available in our forest was largely overestimated during the wood supply agreements, resulting in overlogging.

In my local forests around Valla and it is easy to see evidence of this. The trees currently growing are nowhere as large as the old stumps from past times.

Modern forest harvesting uses huge heavy machinery that opens up the canopy and smashes the understory. The forestry corporation of NSW claims to use selective logging in native forests and that it does not need to use herbicides after logging to control weeds because the forest canopy is maintained. This is not true. You only need to look at the extensive damage that occurs after logging. Weeds invade the area after logging and Bell miners increase in the lantana, leading to die back of eucalypts due to psyllid infestation, and native birds are displaced.

The Rufous scrub bird is an ancient songbird which is now endangered due to loss of habitat, and logging plays a large part in this.

Whilst the world is in a biodiversity crisis, the forestry corporation is destroying the structure, function, and integrity of forests. Science shows that animals that live there do not move on after their habitat is destroyed. They die. Australia has the highest rate of mammal extinction in the world, which is an international disgrace.

Greater gliders, which were once common in the forest of eastern New South Wales are now endangered. This highlights the fact that forests overall are losing their large old trees. Old trees are needed for the hollows they provide for marsupials like the greater glider to live and breed in. The lack of hollows also affects our prey animals like the Powerful Owl that are dependent on these mammals as a food source. Hollows take many decades to form, so the claim that replacing old trees with new ones is sustainable is not true.

I have been on citizen science night surveys for Greater gliders which have resulted in sightings and photographs. Yet the Forestry Corporation (FC) surveys are brief and inadequate. They do not result in as many sightings or location of den trees as those performed by citizen scientist. FC surveys will not protect Greater Glider habitat.

Residents of coastal mid northern NSW are disgusted and disappointed that the NSW Labour Government promise to prevent the extinction of koalas in the wild by 2050 by creating the great koala National Park has not been honoured. Instead logging is occurring at a four times greater rate within the proposed park boundaries than outside it elsewhere in New South Wales. 13 logging coups are currently active. We cannot currently trust FC or our Government to protect our natural heritage for future generations, and I like many others see this as criminal negligence. One of the pillars of sustainability is that current resource use does not impact negatively on future generations, Therefore, any pretence of ecological sustainability for our native forests is an exercise in Greenwashing while we watch our native plants and animals hurtle towards extinction.

Topic 2. Environmental and cultural values of forests, including threatened species and Aboriginal cultural heritage values

As stated in Section 1, logging native forests is extremely detrimental to many threatened and endangered species. Northern New South Wales is a global biodiversity hotspot and unfortunately is also a global deforestation hotspot. NSW has 269 threatened species, and the fragmentation of forests throughout the landscape makes species much less resilient to climate change, as they cannot easily move between areas.

Native forests and the species they contain have great importance to Indigenous Australians. In my area the Bollandolla mountain, set to be logged soon has great significance to Gumbaynggirr people for stories and ceremonies relating to the stingray. The logging of Newry forest, near Mount Nuungu, which is the home of the 'Golden Kangaroo' story, sparked outrage amongst the Gumbaynggirr and they blockaded the forest, resulting in a court case. Yet this forest is still set to be logged in the future, instead of being protected by the Great Koala National Park.

Many Non indigenous Australians like myself feel a deep spiritual connection to our local forests. They are a source of much needed rest and recreation. Science shows that healthy forests release many compounds beneficial to human health, thus the Japanese have the practise of 'forest bathing'

The destruction of biodiversity that has taken millions of years to evolve in our forests takes a toll on my mental health. The thought that future generations will not be able to experience what previous generations have enjoyed is heart breaking. Many young Australians, including my own daughters are choosing not to have children of their own, and the destruction of the natural environment is a large part of their decision. Forest protection should be enshrined in law, and their sustainability should not be left to Corporations or governments, who have proved that they cannot be trusted with this task.

Logging native forests causes the ground to heat up and and dry out and causes major declines in stream flow. Logging now occurs on much steeper slopes than was previously allowed and this is often on highly erodable soils. A prime example is on the steep slopes of the headwaters of the Kalang river near Bellingen where proposed logging would cause silt to wash in, damaging the river and all the industries further down like farming oysters and prawns that depend on healthy rivers for their functioning.

Logging is also now allowed to occur much closer to streams than in previous years, which highlights the push to extract even greater amounts of timber from our native forests than is sustainable.

Incredibly, logging is permitted inside the catchment of the water supply to the city of Coffs Harbour. The value of forests in maintaining a supply of clean water and increasing moisture in the atmosphere leading to rain should be acknowledged, and it should not be up to local councils or the FC to make critical environmental decisions like this.

If water flow declines, and dam walls need to increase their heights to ensure adequate municipal water, increased flooding of land will impact further on the ecosystem, with greater destruction of areas of indigenous significance. The high economic cost of this does not seem to be a factor considered by the Coffs Harbour council, who prefers to take for granted the free ecosystem services provided by native forests. This short sighted approach should be prevented by sufficient rules that are guided by sound scientific and economic principles that protect native forests for a myriad of reasons.

A further example of the environmental vandalism inflicted upon our waterways is the proposed logging around the Blinks river headwaters in the richly biodiverse forest of Clouds Creek near Dorrigo. Local residents feel so strongly about this that they have blocked the entrance to this forest for over 200 days. Logging here would be very detrimental to the Clarence River catchment.

Topic 3. Demand for timber products, particularly as relates to NSW housing, construction, mining, transport and retail

Claims that logging in native forests is necessary are false since logs from native forest accounted for only 9% of Australia's total log production in the year 2023.

Contrary to the idea that claims by the forestry industry that we need wood from native forests for housing, in 2023 half of the logs taken from native forests were turned into wood woodchip and exported. The situation is even worse in hardwood plantations, with 87% being exported as wood chips and only 8% being saw and veneer logs.

I have seen first hand how destructive hardwood plantation logging is at Newry near Urunga. This plantation, like others in the region has been created within the area of surrounding natural forest. The plantation is clear felled and huge amounts of waste biomass are piled up and later burnt, releasing vast amounts of carbon to the atmosphere, accelerating climate change. Later, chemicals that are known to be toxic to aquatic life are sprayed on the ground to control weeds and this occurs right near waterways that feed into the Kalang River.

Hardwoods sourced from native forest or plantations are no longer necessary for the uses identified in this section. Sawn and treated softwood logs and composite timber products made from softwoods can substitute for all current uses for native forests and plantation hardwood. An example of this is Essential energy company moving away from power poles harvested from native forest and substituting them with a different product.

FC of NSW claims that wood is more sustainable than metal for uses such as power poles or house frames yet this fails to take into account the fact that at end of life, there is little recycling of the timber and its carbon is released to the atmosphere.. The metals industry points out that these claims fail to take into account the fact that steel has a longer useful life than timber and is one of the most recycled materials in the world.

Topic 4. The future of softwood and hardwood plantations and the continuation of Private Native Forestry in helping meet timber supply needs

Since plantations already provide 91% of Australia's log production, it makes economic sense to prioritise a higher portion of harvested logs from plantations as saw and veneer logs rather than exporting them as wood chips. This would mean that a smaller area of forest overall needs to be logged and result in a much better outcome for our threatened animal and plants species.

Logging of public native forest by the FC is an industry that runs at a loss and is propped up by New South Wales taxpayers. Subsidising native forest logging is non-competitive and distorts the market away from the more profitable softwood plantation industry.

The small need for high-end and luxury native hardwood products should only be selectively harvested on private land under strict environmentally sustainable conditions.

Topic 5. The role of State Forests in maximising the delivery of a range of environmental, economic and social outcomes and options for diverse management, including Aboriginal forest management models

Currently, the people of New South Wales are paying millions of dollars to destroy the biodiversity of our own state and critical habitat for threatened species. In addition we must fund the millions of dollars in fines for breaches that are imposed on the forestry corporation. The outrage about this situation has prompted New South Wales citizens to put themselves at risk of fines and imprisonment. Recently in Bulga State forest there have been 14 arrests. It is an extremely ironic situation where people standing up for biodiversity are penalised whereas the industry that destroys it has their costs of their misdemeanours covered by the taxpayer. Clearly there would be a social and economic benefit to ceasing native forest logging.

When native forests are allowed to function naturally and without logging, they have a much higher economic value. They protect waterways which has an impact on all industries including tourism. They reduce the risk of catastrophic bushfires. Science shows that logged and thin fires are flammable for many decades afterwards compared to unlogged forest. It was the older and more mature moist forests that resisted burning in the mega fires of 2019/20. Forest like clouds Creek near Dorrigo provided a vital refuge for wildlife as it resisted burning. Now the forestry corporation is set to log that area.

First nation Ranger programs have been successful at managing the recovery and health of native forest. Programs like the Githabul Rangers provide an example of how first Nations knowledge and management can restore the natural and important function of forests.

Topic 6. Opportunities to realise carbon and biodiversity benefits and support carbon and biodiversity markets, and mitigate and adapt to climate change risks, including the greenhouse gas emission impacts of different uses of forests and assessment of climate change risks to forests

Climate change is driving increased risks for forest health and continuing to log in native forests only exacerbates that risk. A significant contribution to meeting our emissions targets would be made by ending native forest logging and allowing previously logged forests to regain lost carbon. Ending native forest logging should be a key part of Australia's journey to net zero. Native forest logging in New South Wales is estimated to release 3.6 million tons of carbon every year and ending it would be the equivalent to removing 840,000 cars from the roads per year.

Unlogged forests are more resilient to climate change and the catastrophic fires that are occurring as a consequence. It is vital to human health as well as to the economy and the ecology that supports all life that fires are reduced as much as possible. The few jobs that are created by the loss-making business of native forest logging are not worth the dire consequences resulting from it.

The world is in a climate and biodiversity crisis. It is time that our government takes this more seriously and follows scientific and economic rationality to end native forest logging. Our future depends on it.